The Flonzaley Quartet

play Romantic masterpieces

with Harold Bauer and Ossip Gabrilowitsch

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Harold Bauer

SCHUBERT
STRING QUARTET IN G (Op.161)

1	I	Allegro molto moderato	*9'31"*
2	II	Andante un poco moto	*7'01"*
3	III	Scherzo: Allegro vivace	*4'37"*
4	IV	Allegro assai	*6'49"*

MENDELSSOHN

5		Canzonetta from String Quartet in E-flat (Op.12)	*3'16"*

SCHUMANN
STRING QUARTET IN A MINOR (Op.41 No.1)

6	I	Introduzione: Andante espressivo - Allegro	*9'34"*
7	II	Scherzo: Presto - Intermezzo	*3'24"*
8	III	Adagio	*5'47"*
9	IV	Presto	*6'31"*

SCHUMANN
PIANO QUINTET IN E-FLAT (Op.44)*

10	I	Allegro Brillante	*8'06"*
11	II	In modo d'una marcia: Un poco largamente - Agitato	*8'26"*
12	III	Scherzo: Molto vivace	*4'57"*
13	IV	Allegro ma non troppo	*6'14"*

BRAHMS
PIANO QUINTET IN F MINOR (Op.34)**

14	I	Allegro non troppo	*11'09"*
15	II	Andante un poco Adagio	*8'21"*
16	III	Scherzo: Allegro	*7'25"*
17	IV	Finale: Poco sostenuto - Allegro non troppo	*9'42"*

BRAHMS
STRING QUARTET IN B-FLAT (Op.67)

18	I	Vivace	*7'00"*
19	II	Andante	*6'47"*
20	III	Agitato (Allegretto non troppo)	*7'40"*
21	IV	Poco allegretto con variazioni (2nd part only)	*3'17"*

THE FLONZALEY QUARTET
with OSSIP GABRILOWITSCH* and HAROLD BAUER**(piano)

Today when America boasts innumerable string quartet ensembles which travel throughout the world, it seems strange to contemplate a time when this most sophisticated of musical forms was hardly cultivated in the U.S. Until the 'residency' system was established in universities, chamber musicians had difficulty earning a living in the U.S. without supporting themselves with teaching jobs (like the Kneisel Quartet) or seeking private patronage (like the Musical Arts Quartet). The major part of American musical life was given over to opera and the symphonic repertoire, and the public adulation of star soloists did not work in favour of chamber music. Nor were many suitable auditoriums or musical organisations to be found, compared to the extensive network of chamber music halls and societies in Europe. A coterie of connoisseurs kept the quartet medium alive in the large American cities. Composers like Daniel Gregory Mason, Charles Ives, Charles Martin Loeffler, Ivan Langstroth, Samuel Gardner and Ruth Crawford Seeger wrote music for quartet, much of which is unfairly neglected, and a few enlightened sponsors, among them Edgar Leventritt and Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, helped to lay the foundations on which groups like the Juilliard, Guarneri, Cleveland, Emerson and Alexander Quartets now thrive.

None was more enlightened than Edward J. de Coppet, a wealthy New York banker of Swiss descent, who liked to play and listen to quartets, while his pianist wife loved to take part in chamber music. Around the turn of the century de Coppet had a regular group of friends who used to drop by for musical evenings. They lost their first violinist in 1902, and while spending the summer at his Swiss home, the Villa Flonzaley by Lake Léman, de Coppet recruited a young violinist as his leader. Back in the U.S. the idea emerged of founding his own ensemble in order to listen regularly to the best chamber music. The Swiss violinist was deputed to hire three more musicians and went off to Europe prepared to enlist Jacques Thibaud or Georges Enesco as leader for he was a modest man who saw himself as the second violinist. He was Alfred Pochon (born Yverdon, 30 July 1878; died Lutry, 26 February 1959) who had studied with César Thomson at the Liège Conservatoire, moved with his teacher to the Brussels Conservatoire as assistant professor in 1898, played second violin in Thomson's quartet and led the orchestra for Ysaÿe's concerts.

Pochon's final choice as leader for the quartet was another assistant professor from the Brussels Conservatoire, the Italian virtuoso Adolfo Betti (born Bagni di Lucca, 21 March 1873; died Lucca, 2 December 1950) who had been a fellow student under Thomson at Liège. The violist selected was Ugo Arar (born Venice, 19 July 1876; died Lausanne, 2 December 1936), another student of Thomson and a classmate of both violinists. Ara had also spent three years studying composition in Vienna with Robert Fuchs. Seeking a cellist, Pochon was recommended by the composer Victor Vreuls to approach Iwan d'Archambeau (born Herve, 28 September 1879; died Villefranche-sur-mer, 29 December 1955). He was the son of the violinist/composer Jean Michel d'Archambeau and had learned the cello under Alfred Massau at the Verviers Conservatoire in order to play in the family quartet (with his brothers Felicien and Marcel taking the inner parts); he later studied with Edouard Jacobs at the Brussels Conservatoire and Hugo Becker at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt.

With the three upper instruments handled by pupils of the same master and the cellist also coming from the Franco-Belgian school, the four had an uncanny understanding from the start, as well as a perfect title taken from their sponsor's summer residence. Although they had been brought together as a private ensemble they were so close-knit in musical and personal terms that their collaboration could not be restricted to the de Coppet salon. By 1905 the quartet was giving public recitals in Switzerland, and on 5 December that same year they made their American début at the Carnegie Chamber Music Hall. In 1907 the quartet appeared in Munich,

Leipzig, Frankfurt, Cologne and Amsterdam, and spent most of the 1907/08 season touring the U.S. Soon the Flonzaley was one of the world's best-known quartets, based in the U.S. for most of the year but spending the summer in Switzerland and travelling regularly throughout Europe.

The quartet's second nationwide American tour was made in 1912. The only personnel changes in a quarter of a century concerned the viola chair: in 1917 Ara joined the Italian Army and was replaced by Louis Bailly (born Valenciennes, 13 June 1882; died Cowansville, 21 November 1974), a product of the Paris Conservatoire who had played in the Capet and Geloso Quartets. In 1924 Ara returned after Bailly took up a teaching post at the Curtis Institute, but his health was no longer up to touring and he was soon replaced as a stopgap by Felicien d'Archambeau. In 1925 the viola was entrusted to Nicolas Moldavan (born Kremenetz, 23 January 1881; died New York, 21 September 1974) who had studied the violin under Fiedelman in Odessa and Korguef at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. After moving to the U.S. Moldavan studied further with Kneisel, who had advised him to switch to the viola, and later played with the Lenox Quartet. The Flonzaley's formation was now constant until its last concert at New York's Town Hall on 17 March 1929, after which it dissolved in a flurry of writs. Some of the legal trouble sprang from Pochon's desire to re-form the ensemble; he was forced to choose the title Stradivarius for his new quartet in which Moldavan also played. One suspects d'Archambeau and Moldavan did not get on, since the cellist joined the Stradivarius Quartet only when the violist left in 1935. In between d'Archambeau restarted his solo career, no mean feat at the age of 50. Betti turned to teaching and eventually returned to Italy. Pochon retired from quartet playing in 1938, and directed the Lausanne Conservatoire from 1941 to 1957. Moldavan joined the new Coolidge Quartet in 1935, and d'Archambeau moved in 1939 to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and then back to Belgium in 1950.

In all the Flonzaleys gave around 3,000 concerts of which 2,500 took place in some 400 American towns and the rest in Europe. In an age when touring America meant a series of 'community concerts' to which a handful of auditors might turn up, the quartet travelled indefatigably playing anything from Haydn to *Turkey in the Straw*. They allotted the de Coppet family some six weeks of their time a year, and, when not touring, gave a recital for the banker and his friends every Sunday. The quartet kept up the connection with de Coppet until he died in 1916, and even afterwards was sponsored by his son André.

The Flonzaleys were among the first full-time professional string quartets - and one of the best. Its quality sprang partly from its unified style, in particular the all-important matching and understanding of its violins. Iwan d'Archambeau was one of the great quartet cellists, equally adept at providing the bass line and playing solo, and all the violinists who played in the ensemble were excellent artists. Even if Moldavan did not hew to the same tradition as the others he disrupted the group's corporate personality less than he would have done as the second fiddle, and the sheer quality of his viola tone was an asset as can be heard in the Brahms quartet. Even with him in the line-up the overall style remained Franco-Belgian, rooted in the 19th century with light, wristed bowing, restrained vibrato and a fair amount of *portamento*. By the time they made their recordings, the players no longer used all-gut strings but they retained mannerisms of the gut era. In the Schubert G major Quartet, for instance, the style was considerably less weighty than that of the Busch Quartet whose members were only a decade or so younger. Such markings as *sforzato* were treated more lightly than they would be even in the 1930s, let alone today, and sentiment was more restrained yet no less deeply felt (e.g. the slow movement of the Schubert).

The Flonzaley repertoire ranged from Baroque trio sonatas (which they performed with two violins and cello) through arrangements by Pochon

of spirituals and popular songs to the modern scores of their time. The quartet was famous for their readings of the Classical quartets but they were children of the late Romantic era, and their essentially delicate, graceful Classical style easily expanded into the *tempo rubato* mode of the Romantics. They introduced America to Wolf's 'Italian' Serenade, Schoenberg's D minor, Stravinsky's *Three Pieces* and quartets by Milhaud, Bloch, Loeffler, Gardner and Mason.

The Flonzaley Quartet's recording career fell into three periods: acoustic discs of single movements with Louis Bailly as violist, performances with Ugo Ara and Felicien d'Archambeau which remained unissued (probably because they were made during the transition from acoustic to electric recording technology), and the electric recordings with Moldavan. The electric recordings include a Dohnanyi, three Beethoven and four Mozart quartets in addition to the works featured on this 2-CD set. A vivacious Haydn 'Lark' and the Brahms B-flat remained unissued at the time, overtaken by the industrial slump which arrived in 1929 (although the 'Lark' eventually came out on LP the Brahms makes its first appearance on this release). The Flonzaleys played a good deal of Schumann, and the quartet performance included here is a model of style. Perhaps the most beautiful playing is delivered in Mendelssohn's *Canzonetta* where their Franco-Belgian polish and Romantic instincts co-exist in perfect equipoise.

The two pianists featured in the Flonzaley recordings of piano quintets were among the most interesting artists of their time. Both were longtime associates of the quartet, both on and off stage, as well as friends of each other (together they formed a celebrated two-piano team). Harold Bauer (born London, 28 April 1873; died Miami, 12 March 1951) was virtually self-taught as a pianist. In his delightful memoirs he wrote of his earliest musical sensations which included a one-man band: 'That, to me, was real magic; and I longed unspeakably to grow up and conquer my fear of the sounds, so that I could wield the power he possessed - some day! I suppose it was this mingled feeling of fear and ambition that made me try to find the notes of a tune which had alarmed me to the extent of wanting to hide under the table. After I had picked out the notes, I did not mind it so much. It was the opening of Brahms's piano quintet, and I am still a little afraid of it.' Bauer had piano lessons as a child and always played the instrument, but his main outlet was the violin. He started his professional career as a violinist, even leading a quartet (in which Herbert Walenn was the cellist). He was encouraged by Paderewski who said: 'You must become a pianist - you have such beautiful hair.'

Finding it easier to obtain work on the piano than the violin, Bauer taught himself how to phrase and draw tone from the keyboard basing his hand movements on the dancing of Isadora Duncan. He often played with Kreisler and Casals (separately and together in a trio), and once after a concert in Portland in which he and Kreisler performed the 'Kreutzer' Sonata they exchanged instruments and played part of the piece again for their friends. Bauer played chamber music with Ysaÿe, Thibaud, Marsick, Gérardy and Hollman. He also toured in a piano quartet in which his colleagues were Huberman, Tertis and Salmond. Although he acquired an excellent technique he was famed above all for the tone quality and phrasing he had striven so hard to perfect. With his background he was the ideal chamber musician.

Bauer's recording of the Brahms Piano Quintet shows how well he concealed his fear of the work! The grandeur of the interpretation undoubtedly owes much to him, but the quintet also needs a pianist who can merge as well as lead. 'To this day', Bauer wrote 'having relinquished my violin for the piano half a century ago, I find myself influenced by the habits of phrasing derived from the violin bow and from the feeling of the interweaving of separate parts which I gained from my practice of ensemble

music, and I know that I should have been a totally different kind of musician if I had not been for so long a violinist.'

Ossip Gabrilowitsch (born St. Petersburg, 7 February 1878; died Detroit, 14 September 1936) was a more orthodox pianist, the supreme keyboard poet of his time. He studied the piano with Anton Rubinstein but also took composition and theory courses from Navratil, Liadov and Glazunov at the Conservatory in his home city. After winning the Rubinstein Prize in 1894 he had further studies with Leschetizky in Vienna and made his début in Berlin in 1896. In addition to playing the piano Gabrilowitsch was a skilled conductor; he directed the Munich Konzertverein from 1910 to 1914, and the Detroit Symphony from 1918 until his death. He married Mark Twain's daughter Clara, a soprano with whom he gave frequent recitals.

Gabrilowitsch was the 'perfect fifth' in the Schumann Piano Quintet, a work which brought out his best qualities. The performance included on this set was the second of two recordings of the work he made with the Flonzaleys (there had been an abridged acoustic recording made in 1923). In a work which gives the pianist virtually no rest Gabrilowitsch was able to illuminate any number of details without holding up the exhilarating drive of the performance. This interpretation has still not been surpassed for its sustained but never overplayed lyricism. The Piano Quintet is perhaps Schumann's finest composition. Its many felicities include a march-like slow movement with a stormy central section, a Scherzo based on a simple chromatic scale and framing two contrasting Trios, and an ending which combines the main themes of the outer movements in a triumph of counterpoint.

Rehearing the two quintet performances more than six decades on, one is struck by the sheer verve and excitement which could be generated by two pianists who never banged the keyboard and four string players temperamentally incapable of using the bow as a hammer.

The Schubert G major Quartet was recorded on 19 & 20 December 1929 and first issued on Victor 7475/78 (matrices CVE 49194/99 & 49400/01); the Mendelssohn *Canzonetta* was recorded on 19 December 1928 and first issued on Victor 7478 (matrix CVE 49402); the Schumann A minor Quartet was recorded on 22 & 23 December 1927 and first issued on Victor 1374/77 (matrices BVE 40492/99); the Schumann Piano Quintet was recorded on 21 December 1927 and first issued on Victor 8092/95 (matrices CVE 40484/91); the Brahms Piano Quintet was recorded on 21 & 23 December 1925 and first issued on Victor 6571/75 (matrices CVE 31601/08, 34231 & 34234); the Brahms B-flat Quartet was recorded on 1, 2 & 6 March 1928 and the third movement was issued on Victor 7235 (matrices CVE 41765/66); the complete first and second movements (matrices CVE 41763/64 & 41769/70) and second part of the fourth movement (matrix 41767) of the Brahms were previously unissued.

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